

Department of Community Resources and Services

ANNUAL REPORT • 2019

Howard County Commission on Disabilities

COMMISSIONERS

Elliott Finkelstein, Chair

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Heidi Burghardt
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Andrea Kolp
Leslie Kornreich
Diane Mikulis*
Randy Murbach

Nicole Czarnecki

Karen Wood

Arthur Gold

Martin Jones, Ph.D.

PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITIES

The Howard County Commission on Disabilities (Commission) was established by statute in 1988 to:

- 1. increase public awareness
- 2. advise the County Government on local governmental programs, policies and budget
- 3. assist the County Government in ensuring compliance with the requirements of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990



CONTACT INFORMATION

Michelle Henry, ADA Coordinator Howard County Office of ADA Coordination Department of Community Resources and Services 9830 Patuxent Woods Drive Columbia, Maryland 21046

www.howardcountymd.gov/ada

If you need this information in an alternate format, contact Erica Lewis at 410-313-6402 (voice/relay) or ealewis@howardcountymd.gov.

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^{*} no longer serving on the Commission

2019 Highlights

Report on the Status of People with Disabilities in Howard County

Tasked with Status Report on People with Disabilities

n 2018, the Commission, under Council Resolution 23-2018 (CR 23-2018), was tasked with studying and making recommendations regarding the County's ability to serve the needs of residents with disabilities, specifically in the areas of education, employment, housing, transportation, and peer relationships.

During the nearly year-long study, the Commission reviewed literature, researched best practices, collected data through public surveys, engaged in discussions with stakeholders, reflected on their own observations and personal experiences, and conducted a public transportation forum.

The draft report was completed and released to the public early February 2019.



Convened Public Hearing on Draft Report

The Commission then convened a public hearing on February 13, as required under CD 23-2018, to present the draft report and elicit feedback from the community. Those comments were then to be included in the final report.

Met with County Executive to Review Key Findings and Recommendations

The Commission submitted its final CR 23-2018 report – the 2019 Report on the Status of People with Disabilities in Howard County – to the County Executive and members of the County Council in April 2019. The Commission then met with the County Executive and members of his leadership team on June 24 to present key findings and recommendations contained in the report. To read the entire Commission's report, click here.

Increase Public Awareness of the Contributions in our Community of Persons with Disabilities

Hosted Twenty-Fifth Annual Awards

The Commission hosted its 25th Annual Awards on October 3. The Commission received proclamations in recognition of National Disability Employment Awareness Month from the Howard County Executive and Governor of Maryland.

Guest speakers included Carol Beatty, Secretary of the Maryland Department of Disabilities, and Kelby Brick, Director of the Governor's Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. Brick provided the keynote presentation, "Empowering Our Ecosystem," highlighting systemic barriers in society that limit opportunities for deaf and hard of hearing Marylanders. Following the keynote, Mr. Brick moderated a panel discussion of six deaf business owners (bottom photo).





Far left, Kelby Brick addresses attendees in his keynote presentation. Left, Carol Beatty presents a proclamation from the State of Maryland Governor's Office to Elliott Finklestein, Chair, Howard County Commission on Disabilities. Below, members of the panel answer questions from Brick and the audience about their challenges and triumphs as business owners.



2019 Commission Awards Recipients

EMPLOYER AWARDS

ANEGADA DELIGHTS CARIBBEAN CUISINE, pictured in group photo below with (fr L to R) Elliott Finklestein, County Executive Calvin Ball, DCRS Director Jackie Scott, Delegate Clarence Lam.

Business Owners Elizabeth and Lee Vanterpool, Delegate Terri Hill, Secretary Carol Beatty, Guest Speaker Kelby Brick of the Governor's Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

Anegada Delights was recognized for their commitment to providing equal opportunities for employees with disabilities, as evidenced by inclusive hiring and staff development practices.



HEARTLANDS SENIOR LIVING OF ELLICOTT CITY, pictured in group photo at right with (fr L to R) DCRS Director Jackie Scott, Delegate Clarence Lam, Business **Team Award Recipients Thomas Clinton (Executive Director) and Katie Morros (Food and Beverage Director)**, Delegate Terri Hill, and Secretary Carol Beatty.

Heartlands Senior Living of Ellicott City was recognized for utilizing the skills and talents of individuals with disabilities in order to meet business needs, as evidenced by inclusive recruitment, hiring and accommodations practices.





LEADERSHIP AWARD

Pictured (fr L to R) Elliott Finklestein, County Executive Calvin Ball, DCRS Director Jackie Scott, Delegate Clarence Lam and Brenda **Kelly-Frey.** Kelly-Frey recently retired as director of Maryland Relay, and was recognized for her life-long efforts to ensure communication access for all and for her personal and professional commitment to increasing public awareness and advancing the rights of people who are deaf and hard of hearing.

SERVICE AWARDS



LINDSEY RITTER

Lindsey Ritter and **Diane Rogers** (NOT PICTURED) — educators in the Howard County Public School System — were recognized for increasing awareness and acceptance of disability and inclusion through interactive classroom activities.

la Shubitidze — a committed home health care aide — was recognized for supporting individuals with disabilities to enable them to live meaningful, self-directed lives as full participants in their communities.

Special Olympics Maryland – Howard County was recognized for their commitment to improving the lives of individuals with intellectual disabilities through sports, by promoting physical fitness, social connections and the development of sportsmanship and teamwork skills. Bob Baker, Director, and Marilyn Miceli, Assistant Director, were on hand to accept the award.



IA SHUBITIDZE

INDIVIDUAL ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

Jim Barrett is a recent high school and Project SEARCH graduate, and was recognized for being a role model in employment by demonstrating that success is achievable through a strong work ethic, goal-setting and a willingness to learn.

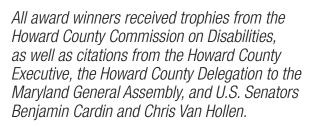
Juan Carroll is a dedicated employee of a local grocery store, and was recognized for being a role model in employment by demonstrating that success is achievable through a strong work ethic, enthusiasm and active community involvement.



BOB BAKER AND MARILYN MICELI

PROGRAMMATIC ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Meagan Downey, program manager at the Robinson Nature Center, was recognized for her leadership and commitment to providing a welcoming, accessible and sensory-friendly recreation environment that is responsive to the needs of visitors.





JIM BARRETT



MEAGAN DOWNEY



JUAN CARROLL

The Commission also recognized **Antwerpen Nissan of Clarksville, Brookfield Christian School of** Maple Lawn, Howard County Public School System Central Office and Pizza Hut of Ellicott City for their efforts to build inclusive workforces.

Increase Public Awareness of Concerns Impacting Persons with Disabilities

Hosted Presentations on Respite Care Programs

espite care is a supportive service providing short-term, temporary relief to a caregiver of a child or adult with a disability or chronic health care need. Multiple respite care program options exist, each administered by a separate entity and each having its own funding source, eligibility criteria and application process. On March 28, the commission's provider committee hosted a daytime presentation on respite care program options available to Howard County residents. On the evening of June 12, the committee collaborated with the Howard County Transition Outreach Partnership to co-host a repeat presentation on respite care programs.

Hosted Presentation on Low Intensity Support Services

The Low Intensity Support Services (LISS) program may provide up to \$2,000 in short-term funding for eligible children and adults with developmental disabilities who are not currently receiving services through the Maryland Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) or other Medicaid waiver programs. The provider committee hosted a June 18 presentation on LISS available through the DDA.

Co-sponsored Transition Symposium

The commission co-sponsored Howard County's sixth Transition Symposium, a Transition Outreach Partnership event. The symposium provided information and resources for a successful transition to post-high school education, employment, and adult living. Approximately 170 transition-age youth with disabilities, parents and families, professionals, and exhibitors participated in the daylong event on November 9.

Breakout session topics included transitioning planning, employment, vocational rehabilitation, vocational training options, college readiness, developmental disabilities services, mental health services, advocacy, and public transportation.

Advise on County Government Programs, Policies and Facilities

Reviewed Plans for County's New Circuit Courthouse

The commission's Access Committee hosted a March 12 discussion to review design plans for the county's new circuit courthouse. The meeting focused on the building's exterior and floor plans, and included a presentation by representatives from the Department of Public Works, Clark Construction, the ESJP project management firm, and the HOK architecture and engineering design firm. The access committee made accessibility recommendations that included reserved accessible parking spaces, fixtures, restrooms, refuge areas, and relief areas for service animals.

Reviewed Expansion Plans for The Loan Closet

The Loan Closet provides short- and long-term loans of donated medical equipment, free-ofcharge, to residents in need of such equipment. The commission met with a representative of the Loan Closet of Howard County on April 29. The meeting included a discussion of the Loan Closet's relocation and expansion of services to include loans of assistive technology devices utilized by individuals who have low vision, through a new collaboration with Maryland's Technology Assistance Program. The commission made recommendations regarding the assistive technology equipment.

Participated in County's Website Survey

Howard County Government released an online survey on June 27 seeking public feedback to improve the county's website. Members of the commission completed the survey and provided input on making the website more accessible and user-friendly to individuals with disabilities.

Participated in Online Forum for Ellicott City Master Plan

County Government launched an online forum on July 26 to provide information and solicit community feedback as part of the Ellicott City Watershed Master Plan process. Members of the Commission participated in the online open house and submitted their comments through online surveys.

Took an Accessibility Tour at Howard Community College

The Access Committee met with a representative of Howard Community College (HCC) for a September 17 accessibility tour of the Horowitz Visual & Performing Arts Center and the Health Sciences Building.

The activity focused on accessibility concerns and recommendations raised during the CR 23-2018 study, specifically assistive listening systems and accessible seating in the Smith Theatre, Monteabaro Recital Hall and the Black Box Studio Theatre. The tour also included accessibility considerations in getting from the ground floor to the upper floor of the Horowitz Center.

Reviewed Plans for County Government's New Website

On October 28, the Commission met with a representative of the team overseeing the re-design of the county's website. The meeting included a discussion of creating a more accessible, userfriendly web experience through the use of a "service catalog." The commission made a number of recommendations for the county's website and social media sites, including those pertaining to the need for widespread user testing by individuals with a range of disabilities, the ability for residents with speech disabilities to be able to communicate electronically with county government, audio descriptions and accurate captioning for videos, alt text for photographs and graphics, including the full image of sign language interpreters in videos, and posting contact information for staff responsible for resolving accessibility complaints.

Participated in County Executive's Transportation Forum

The commission participated in the County Executive's December 2 Transportation Forum, where the county shared information regarding the planning, design, operations, and maintenance of transportation systems and provided an opportunity for questions and feedback.

Participated in the County's Age-Friendly Initiative

The launch of Howard County's Age-Friendly Initiative took place on December 3. The initiative seeks to ensure a livable community for people of all ages to include addressing needs across eight domains of livability – domains that allow for safe, walkable streets; multi-modal transportation options; varied housing options; access to needed services; and opportunities for all residents to engage in the community. The commission participated in the Age-Friendly event launch.

Conferred with Howard County Library on Commission's Priorities

On December 9, the commission met with representatives from Howard County Public Library System to discuss library activities and plans that are relevant to the commission's priorities as outlined in the CR23-2018 Report. The discussion focused on education, employment and peer relationships.

STAFF AND CONTACT INFORMATION

The Howard County Commission on Disabilities is staffed by the employees of the Department of Community Resources and Services:

Michelle Henry, Executive Secretary **Erica Lewis, Staff Liaison** Terry Zeigler, Recording Secretary

Howard County Commission on Disabilities c/o Howard County Department of Community Resources and Services 9830 Patuxent Woods Drive Columbia, MD 21046

PHONE 410-313-6400 (VOICE/RELAY) EMAIL CoD@howardcountymd.gov

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